

GOSPEL REPENTANCE.

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED IN

ST. PETER'S CHURCH,

On SUNDAY, *November* the 25th, 1759.

BY THE

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RECTOR of *Loughrea* in the County of *Galway*. *κ*

*Repent ye therefore and be converted that your Sins may
be blotted out, when the Times of Refreshing shall
come from the Presence of the Lord.*

ACTS, Chap. iii. Ver. 19.

D U B L I N :

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MATHEW iii. 42.

In those Days came John the Baptist preaching in the Wilderness of Judea and saying, Repent ye: For the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.

NO Man could ever be better qualified for the Office of Fore-runner to our Blessed Lord, than John the Baptist. The miraculous Circumstances that ushered him into Life declar'd him to be some extraordinary Person; and these Circumstances were not hid in a Corner, but (as St. Luke informs us) "they were
"noised abroad throughout all the Hill
"Country of Judæa: And all they that
"hear'd them, laid them up in their Hearts,
"saying, what Manner of Child shall this
"be?" There is a Tradition, that Herod, (having hear'd of the Wonders that accompanied the Birth of St. John,) when he order'd the Massacre of the Infants at Bethlehem, gave particular Directions that John shou'd be put to Death, although he was *not* born within the Territory of Bethlehem; and this is said to have been the Reason, why his Mother concealed him in a Cave of the Wilderness. Be that as it will, 'tis certain he was educated in the Deserts, and continued there *till the Day of his shewing unto Israel*. How happy was the Disposal of Providence in this Respect, that be-

ing separated from our Saviour (to whom he was nearly related) from his very Infancy, and never having conversed with him till after he had begun his Ministry, no Suspicion of any Juggle or Contrivance between them could possibly be administred to the obstinate and Malicious. His Testimony therefore in Favor of our Lord's Messiahship was so much the more unexceptionable; and accordingly, when our Savior pressed it upon his Enemies they knew not what Answer to make to it.

For thirty Years together, the Desert was the School where he learnt Temperance. " Want (says the learned Dr. Heylin) taught
 " him Abstinence; till Grace and Reason
 " gaining Strength in him, he embraced
 " that Mortification with a deliberate
 " Choice, in which the Preservation of his
 " Life had first engaged him. Inured to a
 " coarse and scanty Diet, with hard and in-
 " commodious Lodging under the Shelter
 " of some Tree, or Rock, or Cave, he
 " brought his Body into Subjection, and
 " quenched or prevented all Desires that
 " were not founded in Reason. He now
 " found the Benefit of religious Austerities;
 " no longer a Fugitive, but a devout Her-
 " mit; an Hermit in his earliest Youth: And
 " while others of *his Age* spend their useless
 " Days in vain Amusements, he, retired
 " from the World and above it, was in-
 " tent only to Prayer and Mortification.
 " Treating

“ Treating his Body with extreme Rigor,
 “ and depressing the Flesh with an unrelent-
 “ ing Severity, he, as it were, refined him-
 “ self to Spirit; he had his Conversation in
 “ Heaven, and lived with the Purity of an
 “ Angel amidst the Cumbrances of frail
 “ Mortality.”

“ In how different a Manner (continues
 “ this elegant Author) do the rest of Man-
 “ kind pass their younger Years? Youth is
 “ accounted by many the Season of *licensed*
 “ Folly; to humour and indulge the Appe-
 “ tites, it's allowed Privilege; and as if
 “ *Nature* were not *sufficiently* depraved, fond
 “ and foolish Parents, or Friends, solicit
 “ and provoke their young Desires with
 “ new and various Delicacies: They train
 “ them up in Intemperance, and inance
 “ their *natural* Pravity with the *acquired*
 “ Malignity of evil Habits.”

But to return: — Thus admirably fit-
 ed to the solemn Office he was to enter on,
 John by *Example* as well as *Precept* preached
 Mortification and Repentance for the Re-
 mission of Sins, saying, “ Repent ye, for the
 “ Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.” His
 Success was great beyond human Expecta-
 tion; for without any shining Advantages to
 recommend him; without offering any thing
 that might sooth and flatter the Vices and
 Appetites of worldly Men; but on the con-
 trary reproving them in the boldest and
 openest Manner, he gained a prodigious

Number of Followers and Disciples of all Ranks and Conditions. Even that Monster of Iniquity Herod (though he afterwards beheaded him) yet he had a Veneration for his Person, and was awed by his Reproof; and “ knowing (as St. Mark says) that he was “ a just and holy Man, he observed him, “ and when he heard him, he did many “ things, and heard him gladly.”

If the important Subject of the Baptist's Ministry (tho' urged from far less hallowed and less favored Lips) may yet awaken and engage your attention, I shall beg leave in the FIRST Place to consider the Nature of true Repentance. ——— SECONDLY, I shall enquire what is meant by the Kingdom of Heaven; ——— THIRDLY, I shall expatiate on that encouraging Motive to sincere Repentance, namely, *that the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.*

And FIRST I am to consider what is the Nature of true Repentance.

I. According to the best Theological Authors, Repentance is said to be of two Kinds; Legal, and Evangelical. 1. What is usually called legal Repentance, is that Regret or Reluctance that ariseth in a Person, after having done something which he ought not to have done. When Judas saw that Christ was condemned, it is said of him, that he repented of what he had done. Mat. xxvii. 3. He was mightily afflicted in his Mind about it, and wished it had not been done.

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But *this* Repentance arises from a Fear of the *Punishment* denounced against Sin, and is not accompanied with *Hatred of Sin*: As when a Malefactor suffers for his *Crimes*, he reflects upon his *Actions* with Sorrow; but this being a forced Act, proceeding from a violent Principle, is consistent with as great a *Love of Sin* as he had before, and may be entirely terminated on himself: He may be sorry for his Crimes, as they have exposed him to *Punishment*, and yet not be grieved that thereby he has *offended God*. Now though it would be very unsafe to rest in this legal Repentance; and tho' if rested in, it could never bring a Man to a saving Acquaintance with God's Pardoning Love; yet it is by no Means to be absolutely cryed down and discouraged. Poor, selfish, and servile, as it appears to be, it is at least better than a dull *Insensibility*; it *may* prepare the Will to be attentive and obedient to the Stirrings of God's Preventing Grace, and so be the more remote Means of leading a Man to the true *Evangelical* Repentance, which in the next Place it will be proper to describe.

2. The Repentance then we are now speaking of, which was the Object of the Baptist's Preaching, which is the only one acceptable to God, and the only one to which the Promises are made, is the Effect of Man's Free-Will no longer resisting the Impulse of God's Preventing Grace (implanted in the Soul of every Son of Adam)

but on the contrary closing with it, and co-operating under it to the Detection of the hidden Foulness and Corruption of his own Heart, with an earnest Struggle to overcome it. It may principally be said to consist in the four following Parts; namely, Conviction, Compunction, Mortification, and Desire of Holiness. I shall speak of each of these particularly.

1. Conviction is that first awakening Alarm, that evidently proves to the Sinner; the Danger, Horror, Hell, and Misery of the present State of his Soul. It doth not stand to appeal to *particular* Facts committed; but lays open at once the Root and Ground of *All*: Shews him the Ingratitude of his *whole* Heart; manifests to him, that his Regard to God never reached higher than a *servile Fear*; leaves him not a Word to plead, for placing his Affections (either in Whole, or in Part) on God's Enemy the World, and not loving God with *all* his Heart, with *all* his Mind, with *all* his Soul, and with *all* his Strength; it clearly demonstrates to him that Sin is Misery, and Happiness can only be found in Holiness; and yet pronounces him the Slave of Sin, without any Power or Possibility in *himself* to extricate himself from it's Dominion and Tyranny: It darts upon him like Lightning, pierces him through and through as with a Sword, beats down all his false Confidencies, and strikes him to the Ground like Saul of Tarsus,

fus, till with him he is likewise constrained to cry out all trembling and astonished, " Lord " what wilt thou have me to do?" — When Conviction hath proceeded thus far, and hath struck the Mind into a very sore Amazement; it is presently succeeded, (so soon as the Sinner recollects himself) with a severe Compunction, or godly Sorrow; which is the second Step in the Order of true Repentance.

When I speak of the regular Progress in the penitential State, I would not be thought to infer, that a Man *must* continue a certain fixed Time under each of these distinctly. No; God may perform a *great* Work in a *short* Time; and I am persuaded there have been many Instances of those who have been awakened, converted, and received the Pardoning Grace of God under a single Sermon. We have Abundance of Examples of this sudden and effectual Repentance in the Acts of the Apostles, and a very remarkable one in the Case of the penitent Thief. This I say then has certainly happened in *particular* Instances; the *general* Experience however of Christians has been otherwise. All I am therefore here attempting is to set before you it's successive Progress in the Soul of Man, (in order to give you a clearer, and fuller Knowledge of the Nature of true Repentance) without any Regard had to the Slowness or Precipitancy of its Completion. I shall now resume the Subject.

2. Compunction which is consequent to Conviction, is that inward spiritual Grief of the Soul of Man for it's lost abandoned State, it's frail and foolish Wanderings from it's *own* Home, it's *own* God, it's *own* Blessed Savior and Redeemer, that causes it to take a Kind of gloomy Satisfaction in it's own Afflictions, and wrap itself up in the profoundest Sorrow, and refuse to be comforted. It is thoroughly convinced of it's own Darkness and Blindness, (and to carry on the Figure of the newly awakened Paul) it seeks for some one to lead it by the Hand It watereth the Couch with it's Tears; it's Voice is hoarse with complaining, and yet it knoweth no End thereof: It is weary with watching, and yet taketh no Rest; it hateth the Noise of the Multitude; it despiseth the Vanity of Fools; it is greedy and covetous of it's Grief, and will not that any should partake of it; it seeketh Retirement and Solitude, and venteth its Complaints to the wild Rocks and Caverns.

" Will the Lord absent himself for ever :
 " and will he be intreated no more? Is his
 " Mercy clean gone for ever : Is his Promise
 " come utterly to an End for evermore?"

Where is my Jesus, my Savior, and my God? My Sins have driven him far away ; Where, O Where shall I seek and find him?

The Soul thus deeply panged and wounded, presently discovers the latent poisonous Corruption, that feeds and enflames the
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Sore (and so delays the cure of it,) drawing it's venomous Principle from the Lusts of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life; and therefore it proceeds to the Extirpation of all these by Mortification, which is the third Progress of the Soul in the penitential State.

3. There is no Doctrine hath been more grossly abused in the ordinary Practice of the World, than that of Mortification: And whilst some have totally neglected it as useless, and superstitious; others have actually rendered it so, by attributing more to it than really belongs to it. Of the latter Sort are those, who not content with regarding the Exercises of Mortification as *Means* to attain Holiness, or as *Means* of preparing the Soul for the Influences of God's Holy Spirit; have considered, and practised it as Holiness itself; not without a certain *Self-Satisfaction* at the hard Tasks they had imposed on themselves, and challenging a Degree of *Merit* at God's Hands, for the Strictness and Severity of their Performances: and thus whilst they have endeavoured to dethrone some one evil Habit, they have advanced another Enemy, and perhaps a far more dangerous one in it's Room; namely, Spiritual Pride.

Now Holiness was, is, and always will be the *same unalterably* for ever and ever. It has the *same* constituent Parts and Properties, and produces the *same* blessed Operations and

Effects, in *Time*, and in *Eternity*: It only differs in *Degree*; in as much as under the Grossness of these *earthly Vessels*, we cannot possess it *pure* and *unsullied* as we shall *hereafter*, and as the Angels above *even now* enjoy it. But as Mortification, Self-denial, or the Cross of Christ have no Existence in the *Realms of Light*, and constitute no Part of the *Holiness* of the Blest above; so neither can they make the least Portion of it among God's chosen People here on Earth. Holiness consists in a firm, full, and perfect Love of God, and of all his Creatures thro' him: and Mortification is only *so far necessary*, as it suppresses, conquers, and destroys all that may oppose the vital Union of the Soul with God in an effectual Closing with his spiritual Love.

And yet the absolute Necessity of Mortification, as a *Means* to effect this, is sufficiently apparent from Scripture, and the Reason of Things. Had Adam never fell, Mortification would never have been enjoined as a Duty; but as his Fall consisted in the Opening of the low, earthly, bestial Life, so, till that is suppressed in all his Descendants, the Divine Image, which was thereby lost, can never be restored, nor Man be reinstated in his primitive Dignity. The proper Office therefore of Mortification is to *crucify the Flesh*, or the Lusts and Desires thereof: And the plain Reason is, because the Desires of our fallen Nature are Evil. God would
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not call on us to crucify the Flesh or the Desires of the Flesh, if the Desires of the Flesh were good: No; St. Paul tells us how the Case stands, and our own Experience confirms it; to wit, "that the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh;" and again, he says, "They that are Christ's have crucified the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts." It is upon this Account likewise that our Blessed Lord assures us, that "Whosoever doth not bear his Cross, and come after him *cannot* be his Disciple." He, does not say arbitrarily he *shall not*, but he *cannot* be my Disciple, he *cannot*; 'tis impossible in the Nature of Things. God *can* have no Fellowship with *Belial*; if Christians are the *Temples of the Holy Ghost*, (as St. Paul styles us, our Temple must be kept pure and undefiled; not a Wish, or the *least Tendency* of a Wish towards the *World*, which is *at Enmity with God*, must be suffered to remain there: and the Instant such Wishes or Inclinations begin to make their foul Appearance, Mortification is the Besom that must sweep them all away. Now as some Infirmities, some Dreggs, and Remains of our evil Nature will still continue with the Best of us, and not take their Leave till the very Hour of our Death; so Mortification becomes a Duty indispensably necessary, even to the most *confirmed Christians*: And accordingly, we read of it's being practised in a
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very rigid Manner, by the *Apostles themselves*. Yet it will generally be acted with a far higher Degree of Severity under the Horrors of the *penitential State*, than after being made acquainted with that "Perfect Love which casteth out Fear."

The poor forlorn, afflicted Sinner considers himself as fallen under the Wrath of God; he not only hates Sin, that has brought him to this evil Pass; but likewise condemns, and hates *himself* for having acted it. He is so far from favoring or indulging *the Flesh*, that he is determined to *suppress its Tyranny*, and to conquer, punish, and humble it, with a more than ordinary Zeal. Thus (to pursue the Relation of the Apostle's Conversion,) Paul was three Days and three Nights without either Eating or Drinking. And this is preparatory to the Introduction of the fourth and last Step of a sincere and effectual Repentance: namely the *Desire of Holiness*.

4. When the Soul hath seen and felt it's Disease and Misery through *Conviction*; hath not only grieved and lamented it's wretched State with a very sore *Compunction*; but hath likewise applied the Caustick of *Mortification*, to subdue and wear away the proud Flesh, with all the acrid stimulating Humour that fed and pampered it's Disorder; it may then hope to acquire more wholesome Juices, and a sounder, and better Constitution. It not only hates and de-
tests

tests it's former Inclinations and Affections, but it begins to pant after new ones. It earnestly looks up to the Shepherd of Israel, and intreats to be admitted into the richest Pastures: The Power of Prayer begins to open and expand within it, and the Holy Spirit itself, helping it's Infirmities, maketh Intercession for it with Groanings that can never be uttered. These Prayers are presented by the blessed Jesus before the Throne of Grace; he points to his dear Wounds, and pleads the all-sufficiency of that Sacrifice; a Plea all-powerfull and efficacious. His Blood is held forth to the Sinner, who eagerly and joyfully layeth hold of it; and through the Merit of that appropriated to him by Faith, he is made a blessed Partaker of the Kingdom of Heaven.

This naturally leads me to the second general Head I had proposed; namely, what is meant by the Kingdom of Heaven.

II. In Order to gain a more satisfactory Idea of the Kingdom of Heaven, let us first take Notice of it's Opposites which are in a constant War with it, and without the Reduction and entire Demolition of which, it can never be thoroughly fixed and established: and these are the Kingdom of SELF, the Kingdom of the WORLD, and that which gives Laws to both these as deriving under it, I mean the Kingdom of SATAN. All these have their Interests and Influences in poor Fallen Man: and unless Christ had
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come to save him, he could no more have delivered himself from this threefold Slavery, than he could raise a Tower to reach Heaven like the foolish Attempt of the deluded Builders of Babel.

Now that the Kingdom of SELF was first established in the Soul of Man by the malign Policy of the old Serpent, is evident from this; that the Fall of Man was of the same Nature, and from the same Principle, as the Fall of Satan. For Satan had sown his Seed in him: (Therefore it is that wicked Men are called the Seed of the Serpent, Generation of Vipers, and the Children of the Devil). Both disdaining any longer to seek and obtain their Happiness from God alone, had endeavoured to derive it immediately and independently from *themselves*: *Both* had aspired to be as "Gods discerning Good and Evil;" without submitting to God's holy, wise, and just Directions in what was to be chosen, or avoided, in the several Objects presented to them: *Both* therefore had rebelled against the Throne of God, though both Rebels were not dealt by in the same Manner. *Man* had neither fallen from the same Heighth, nor into the same Depth that Satan had, and had been moved and instigated by the Wiles and Subtilties of the latter: *Man* therefore *could* be redeemed from his State of Sin and Misery by the mysterious and amazing Sacrifice of the Son of God; but the *Devil* had fallen even beyond the *Power* of Redemption,

Redemption, being so wrapt up and entangled in the Web of Sin he had spun, and is still spinning from his own Bowels, that *Repentance* could never *reach* him: For if it were *possible* for him to repent *truly* and *thoroughly*, the God of Mercy and of Love, would yet point out some Way even for *him* to escape. — But to proceed: The Seed of Satan being sown in Man, (for want of his Circumspection, Vigilance and Attention to God's Holy Will and Commandments) the Temper, Disposition, and Affections of the Arch-Enemy began to break forth in him, and the Kingdom of SELF was presently established. Thus Man became covetous, proud, a Boaster, self-seeking, ambitious, a Lover of Pleasure, more than a Lover of God. Therefore our Lord and Savior commands us, if we would be Followers of him, not to gratify *Self*; no, we must deny *Self*; “Whosoever will come after me let him deny *himself*, and take up his Cross.” Mark viii. 34. And the Reason is, because in gratifying *Self*, we are *Followers* or Imitators of Satan, and are still Subjects and Servants of the Kingdom of *Self*.

Again, Man is the Bubble, Servant, and Slave of the Kingdom of the WORLD, which has an Interest and Power within him of somewhat a different Nature from the former, tho' in strict Union, and Alliance with it. As it's Elements, it's Productions, and natural Evils exercise Dominion over
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the *Body*, and bring on it Diseases, and Death itself; so it's Blandishments, and it's Vanities, as well as it's Cares, and it's Afflictions, usurp a boundless Tyranny over the *Soul*. We are so beduped by it's Sorceries, and Enchantments, that we confirm one another in Subjection to it; and he that is most forward in a mean abject Complacency to the *World*, is the most carressed, and applauded among us. *Self* issues forth it's Laws to oblige us to a Compliance with the *World*, and the *World* on the other Hand affords the vicious Means of *Self*-Gratification. Thus both Powers are united for our Ruin and Destruction: And from this Slavery to the *World* we derive the Principles of sneaking Art and Flattery, Dissimulation and Falshood, Vanity and Effeminacy, Cowardice and Infidelity. It is upon this Account, that seeing the Danger for us, which we neither are aware of *ourselves*, nor *disposed* to avoid, the Holy Ghost gives us Warning thro' the Apostle John; " Love not
" the World, neither the Things that are
" in the World: If any Man love the World,
" the Love of the *Father* is not in him."

Now that the World derives what Power and Influence it has over us, originally from *Satan* as the Fountain-Head, is evident from many Texts of Scripture. Thus the Devil is called the *Prince of this World*, John xii. 31. and the *God of this World*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. He boasted to our Savior that he was so,
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Mat. iv. 9. and he acteth in this World as a *Prince powerfully working in the Children of Disobedience*, Eph. ii. 2.

But besides these Substitutes of his, the *World and Self*, by Means of which the Evil One continually Assaults our Peace, he sways and governs us more immediately in his own *personal* Application to our Souls, bringing the Kingdom of SATAN into that poor fallen Creature, which once was the Residence of *God* himself. This is the most shocking of all Tyrannies, as in this the very *Features* of the Devil appear *plain and undisguised*; and it exerciseth it's Dominion differently, as Men's Souls are variously fitted to receive it; in Proportion as they resist the *preventing Grace* of God, and so lay themselves more and more open to it's horrid Impressions. From hence come ungoverned Rage, and inhuman Cruelty; furious Lusts, and insatiable Appetites; Revellings, and Drunkenness; Rapine, and Murder; Cursing, and Swearing; Imprecations, and Blasphemies; a black and balefull Train, which carry their own Hell about them, and give us a faint but dismal Foretaste of the Torments of the Damn'd.

Behold then this Apostate, *Man*, this Apostate from the State of Bliss and Glory, in which God had placed him; behold him *now* swallowed up in *Self*; *now* cringing to, closing with, and dependant on a vile and cursed *World*; *now* drove about and reeling in
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the Whirlwind of diverse *Lusts* and *Passions*; and wondering adore that *inexhausted* Fund of Mercies, which yet vouchsafes to *pity* and to *save*, which yet affords *Repentance* as the *Means*, and yet holds forth to us (all undeserving as we are) The KINGDOM of HEAVEN as the End.

This Kingdom, established on the Ruins of the Devil's Empire, begins it's gentle Sway, by proclaiming *Liberty* to the wretched Captive; calls all it's Subjects no longer *Slaves*, but *Sons*; *Heirs of God*, and *Joint-Heirs with Christ*; enables us to trample the whole Power of Sin and Satan under our Feet, the Bruiser of the Serpent's Head *himself* not disdaining to reside within us, and make use of us as his Instruments for manifesting his Victory over his *fallen Foe*. He triumphs most gloriously in the Hearts of all his People; and he causes *their* Hearts to triumph through the Mightiness of their Succorer, and Defender. As God deigned *outwardly* to reign over the Jews in their State of Theocracy, till the Time of Samuel; so *now* doth he, in the most gracious and condescending Manner, reign *inwardly*, and fixes his holy and blessed Kingdom in the *Souls* of his chosen Subjects, the Israel of God, the Children of the *Faith* of Abraham. His Reign is evident, *first* in the dethroning of the cursed Usurper, and the extirpating the very Root and Branch of willful Sin: Secondly, in his blessed and effectual Influence over the Will and Affections,

ons, and bringing in a new Law, even the Law of *Liberty* into Mens Souls; the glorious Law of *Liberty* from *dead Works*, that they may henceforth “ serve the Lord “ *without Fear*, in Holiness and Righteousness before him all the Days of their “ Lives.”

The Kingdom of Heaven, in the Words of the Text, and in the parallel Passages in the New Testament, hath both a *General*, and a *private* Sense. 1. In the *General* Sense it includes the whole Church of Christ, all *true* Believers of all Nations, Parties, and Interests; all whomsoever the Lord our God hath called, who having obeyed the Call, and repented, have been justified freely through Faith, by the Grace of Jesus Christ. These are the *Subjects* of God's Kingdom of Heaven upon Earth; and they have one summary Law given them, which (however difficult to others) is to them, thro' the indwelling Power of Christ, easy, practicable and delightfull; namely, “ to love “ the Lord their God with *all* their Hearts, “ with *all* their Minds, with *all* their Souls, “ and with *all* their Strength, and their “ Neighbour as themselves.”

2. In the more *private* Sense, it is confined to the Impartment of God's Holy Spirit to particular Persons. Man is in *himself* a *Microcosm*, a little World; he hath within him a Variety of Affections, Passions, and Interests, opposite often to each other, which
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like contending Parties in an ill-governed Common-wealth, raise a Fermentation that endangers the *Whole*: But the Kingdom of Heaven, when *it* has once taken Place, causeth *these Fermentations* to subside; and God holding forth one Glorious Object, even the Light of his Love, to which every Affection, and Inclination of Man should tend as to it's proper Center, they are all here kept in *Union*; and God speaks *Peace* into the ruffled Soul, as he bids the Waves of the raging Sea *be still*. More-over God directs and governs in a peculiar Manner every One whom he hath *justified*; he submits to be consulted by him in humble Prayer, and returns wise, suitable, and gracious *Answers*, in a Manner not *outwardly* to be *expressed*, but only *spiritually* to be *felt* and *discerned*. The Kingdom of Heaven therefore is *internal* and *spiritual*; "The Kingdom of God (says our "blessed Savior) is *within* you. Luke xvii. 21. And again, St. Paul tells us, Rom. xiv. 17. "The Kingdom of God is Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost." 1. It is *Righteousness*; and it not only instructeth Man in the *Way* of Righteousness, but it likewise *enableth* him to *walk* in it according to God's Will; it is not a *human*, but a *divine* Righteousness, bringing with it into the Soul the Mind that was in Christ Jesus.

2. It is *Peace*; and *such* a Peace as passeth all Understanding; a Peace which the *World* had never to afford us; it is derived

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to us from our Melchisedec the King of *Salem*; which *signifies* Peace, and how comfortably *sweet*, how beyond *Measure* full must our Peace be, when the whole *Kingdom* of *Peace* is poured forth into our Souls. They who have newly recovered from a long and painfull Disease of the *Body*, know experimentally the Blessing of sound Health; (a Blessing little regarded in general, whilst we are in the full and *perfect* Enjoyment of it); how much more then, *they* who have felt and tasted the Misery of a diseased *Soul*, are inwardly healed and refreshed by the reviving Cordial of the attoning Blood, *being at Peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord*.

3. Lastly the Kingdom of God is *Joy in the Holy Ghost*. It is a Joy serene, pure, holy and unmixed; a Joy *which no Man taketh from us*; and which all the Powers of Satan and his accursed Agents can never hurt or disturb. It triumphs in the midst of *Tribulations*; it *smileth* at the Rage of *Persecution*, and still *cherisheth* the Heart under the most afflicting and agonizing Torments. What shall I say more? Had I the *Tongue of Men and Angels*, I could never give any adequate Description of the Soul's dear precious Joy in the Holy Ghost. — It is Eloquence to be *silent*, where no Expression can reach the Immenfity of the Subject.

I proceed under the THIRD General Head, to consider that great and encouraging

ing Motive to sincere Repentance; namely, that the Kingdom of Heaven is at *Hand*.

III. It is a *present* Good, attainable *here* on *Earth*. If Men might not have some Foretaste and Experience (however faint and glimmering in Comparison) of that Eternal *Weight of Glory* which shall be their Portion and Inheritance in the World to come; their poor frail Nature would be *discouraged* and sink under the Oppression of worldly *Troubles*, or be easily allured and led aside, through the false Glare and Enticements of worldly Vanity. A distant *Reversion* of Bliss (however probable in the Expectation) will not have its due Influence and Effect in the Minds of Men in general; and accordingly 'tis observable, that *they only* who really believe it to be *at Hand*, press forward into the Kingdom, and take it (as it were) by *Violence*. And blessed be God he hath not left us in any *Doubt* concerning this *Earnest* of our Salvation, afforded us, to sooth and support us in our weary Pilgrimage; not only having raised up Witnesses to this Truth, even many Thousands of his faithfull People who *know*, and can *attest* it upon their *own Experience*; but hath also assured us of it in innumerable Passages of his infallible Word. Thus, after Jesus hear'd that John was cast into Prison, he began his Preaching with the very Words of the Baptist; "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is *at Hand*."

Again,

Again, he saith, John iii. 36. " He that
 " believeth on the Son, *hath* everlasting
 " Life." He speaks in the present Tense,
 he *hath* it *now*, " He *is* sealed unto the Day
 " of the Lord:" " The Spirit of God
 " *witnesseth* with *his* Spirit that he is a Child
 " of God." Rom. viii. 16. Or as St. Paul
 has it 2. Cor. i. 22. " He hath also *sealed* us,
 " and given the *Earnest* of the Spirit in our
 " *Hearts*." Again Ephes. i. 13. " In whom
 " also after that ye believed, ye were *seal-*
 " *ed* with the Holy Spirit of Promise which
 " is the *Earnest* of your Inheritance, until
 " the Redemption of the purchased Posses-
 " sion, unto the Praise of his Glory." Now
 the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of
 Heaven in the Text, and the "*Earnest* of
 " our Inheritance through the Holy Spirit
 " of Promise" is one and the same Thing,
 as is evident from the fore-cited Definition of
 the Kingdom of Heaven by St. Paul;
 namely, that " it is Righteousness, Peace,
 " and Joy in the Holy Ghost:" For what
 is this "*Earnest* of the Inheritance through
 " the Holy Spirit," but " Righteousness,
 " Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost." And
 this is agreeable to St. Peter, 1. Pet. i. 8,
 9. " Whom having not seen ye *Love*; in
 " whom, though *now* ye see him not, yet
 " *believing*, ye rejoice with Joy unspeak-
 " able, and full of Glory: *receiving* the *End*
 " of your Faith, even the Salvation of your
 " *Souls*." I shall not produce any more out
 of

of the many *many* remaining Texts of Scripture to this Point; presuming that I have already clearly proved beyond *any Possibility* of even a *plausible* Contradiction, the *important* Doctrine of *present* Salvation, or that the Kingdom of Heaven is *at Hand*. All that seems necessary at present is to press the close Application of it upon all your Hearts.

And surely, if any *Motive* can *incite*, if any *Argument* can *persuade*, if any *Encouragement* can *prevail* on you, to forego the shadowy Vanities of *Time*, in order to lay hold of the substantial Joys reserved for you in *Eternity*; this blest *Assurance* of Faith, this *experimental Foretaste* of spiritual Bliss, cannot fail to have its Charms with you, and *sweeten* the *bitter* Chalice of Repentance.

By the *long-suffering* Patience of the Almighty, I call on you to *Repent*: by the yet Bleeding Wounds of the Blessed Jesus, O Hearts of Stone *Repent*: By the great and glorious Privileges held forth to you, *Repent*, “*Repent* ye for the Kingdom of Heaven is “at hand.” Honored as I am with this gracious *Message* to you, O let me not be an unsuccessful Ambassador, but yield yourselves to my Intreaties, to my Prayers, to my unbounded Love for you. Do not poorly content yourselves with faring as well as your *Neighbours*, but rather be solicitous for the *Rightness* of the Way than the *Number* of the Company. Think only how *small* a Thing is required of you; the renouncing a World
cf

of Woe, Disappointment, Misery, and Disease; think of the happy *Exchange* afforded. The KINGDOM of HEAVEN is *at Hand* for you. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil Ways, and cry to the Lord with deep Contrition; so shall he be Swift to hear, and Mighty to defend; so shall he deliver you from more than an Egyptian Bondage, and thus when "he hath set your Feet at Liberty, you will "run *with Joy* the Way of his Commandments:" Which that we may all do, God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.

F I N I S.

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